



Baw Baw Culture and Connection Precinct

Project update: June 2022

We're advocating for a new culture and community connection precinct for all in the heart of Baw Baw Shire. The project aspires to build on existing underutilised areas surrounding the West Gippsland Arts Centre and Civic Park to create a new community building, improve open spaces and maximise opportunities for community connectedness. The precinct will provide vital social infrastructure to service our rapidly growing community for generations to come.

Project scope

The \$30 million multi-level facility will feature:

- New community library, including a children's library, maker's space, video gaming, reading, collection and study areas.
- Art and cultural space.
- Community meeting rooms.
- Consulting rooms.
- Co-working spaces.
- Café
- Rooftop terrace.
- Public amenities such as parent's room and Changing Places facility.
- Plaza and pedestrian connection to the West Gippsland Arts Centre.

Concept designs



Community benefits



Connect

An inviting and inspiring place for our community to meet, collaborate and forge strong connections.



Belong

A safe and inclusive space to celebrate all walks of life that make up our diverse and vibrant community.



Learn

A place to nurture learning, innovation and development for both children and adults in our community.



Play

A fun and exciting place to come together and explore arts, culture, music and even digital gaming.

In April 2022, Melbourne-based architecture firm Croxon Ramsay was appointed to develop detailed designs for the facility based on their extensive experience in designing community hubs and libraries across Victoria.

The contract includes schematic design, detailed construction documentation and development of internal and external 3D modelling. Designs will aim to maximise use of the building space with accessible and innovative features, while attaining the highest Green Star energy efficiency rating possible. This state-of-the-art development will provide access to much needed community facilities designed to cater for all ages and abilities.

The design process will progress the project to the stage of being truly 'shovel ready', with construction contingent on securing much needed State and Federal Government funding support.

Location

Perfectly positioned on the northern fringe of Warragul's town centre, the new facility will integrate seamlessly with the existing West Gippsland Arts Centre – Baw Baw's key arts, entertainment and culture venue – which recently underwent a successful \$14 million redevelopment and includes a 760-seat theatre, meeting rooms and function spaces.

The two buildings will be connected by an accessible pedestrian plaza that feeds into Warragul's town centre to the south and Civic Park to the north.

Land for the proposed facility is owned by Council and shovel-ready for development.

Costings and funding

Funding breakdown

\$10 million Baw Baw Shire Council

\$10 million State Government

\$10 million Federal Government

\$30 million Project Total

Stage 1 of this project is estimated to cost \$30 million, this includes the new three-story library and learning facility including art gallery space and a cafe.

Council has pledged \$10 million – the largest investment in a single project in Council's history.

We are now seeking \$10 million in matching support from both the State and Federal Governments (\$20 million in total).

So far, the Victorian Government has pledged \$3.5 million towards the project through its Growing Suburbs Fund, while Council currently has an active \$10 million grant application lodged with the Federal Government's Building Better Regions Fund. We are awaiting the outcome of this funding application.



Image: Mayor Cr Michael Leaney and Federal Member for Monash Russell Broadbent MP shake hands in front of the project sign in Civic Park, Warragul.

Timeline

*Subject to change

Oct 2021	Council endorses the project as a main advocacy priority and pledges \$10 million towards the project.
Nov 2021	Geotechnical investigations and site surveying.
Jan 2022	\$3.5 million funding grant secured from the Victorian Government's Growing Suburbs Fund.
Mar 2022	Architect firm Croxon Ramsay appointed to develop detailed designs. Continued advocacy to both State and Federal Governments for the necessary remaining funding.
Dec 2022	Detailed designs complete in preparation for construction tender development.
Jun 2023	Construction procurement process finalised and main construction contract prepared for award.
Jul 2023	Site establishment and commencement of main construction works including construction of the new building and streetscape works.
Early 2025	Defects liability period and operational proving preparing the building for practical completion.
Mid 2025	Practical construction complete and handover.

Advocacy update

Mayor Cr Michael Leaney, Councillors and the Executive team are continuously seeking opportunities to meet with key government decision makers to spread awareness and interest in the project.

Federal support

Recently re-elected Federal member for Monash Russell Broadbent has put support behind this project and pledged to lobby on Baw Baw's behalf, stating "Projects like this maximise opportunities for community connectedness and provide vital social infrastructure that will service our rapidly growing community for generations to come. The multi-use site provides flexibility to support a broad range of uses and will play an important role in preserving this region as a great place to live, work and play".

Local support

Local library organisation Myli and the Baw Baw Arts Alliance have joined Council in advocacy efforts throwing their full support behind the project.

Myli CEO Leanne Williams acknowledged the much-needed investment into accessible and diverse library services to a growing community, stating "This project is much more than just shelves of books. It would offer a dynamic and inclusive range of cultural resources and experiences for all members of our community. This precinct will create connection and social inclusion across library, learning, arts, culture and tourism services – a true hub for all residents of Baw Baw Shire."

The Baw Baw Arts Alliance (BBAA) also recognises the lack of current, and growing need for a local dedicated arts space.



Image: Mayor Cr Michael Leaney, Myli CEO Leanne Williams and Baw Baw Arts Alliance President Anita George unified in their advocacy for the proposed facility.

Project Reference Group

Council has now formally appointed most PRG members representing key community groups including:

- Baw Baw Shire Deputy Mayor Cr Annemarie McCabe
- Baw Baw Shire Central Ward Cr Danny Goss
- Baw Baw Shire Central Ward Cr Joe Gauci
- Baw Baw Shire Ratepayers & Citizens Association member Jan Pickburn
- Myli (West Gippsland Regional Libraries Corporation) CEO Leanne Williams
- Myli (West Gippsland Regional Libraries Corporation) Facilities Manager Jenny Dunn
- Baw Baw Arts Alliance member Sue Acheson
- West Gippsland Arts Centre Manager Rowenna Dunn
- Regional Development Victoria or Victorian Government representative
- Baw Baw Shire Council Manager Major Projects Luke McGrath
- Baw Baw Shire Council Senior Project Manager (including PRG secretariat) Wayne Hewitt

Two additional community members will complete the PRG, with the final selection process now underway.

More information

For more up-to-date project information, visit Council's website at www.bawbawshire.vic.gov.au/CultureandConnectionPrecinct or scan the QR code below.

